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# TIT FOR TAT

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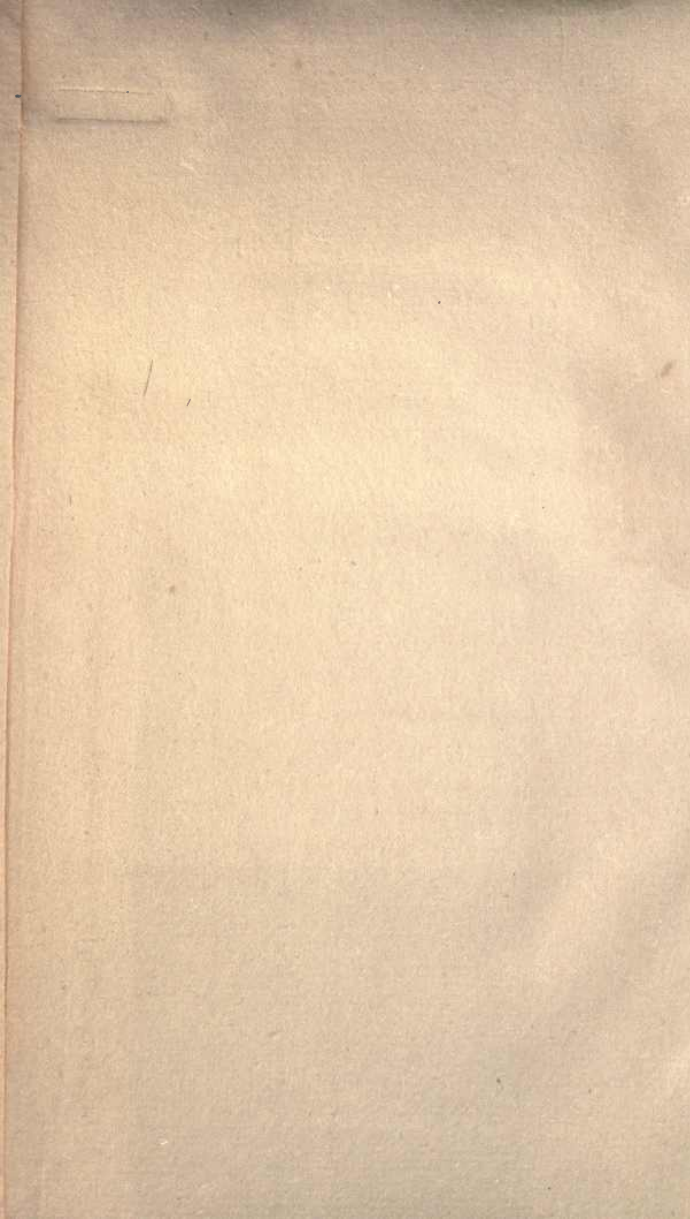
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# TIT FOR TAT,

A

C O M E D Y

I N T H R E E A C T S.

---

Performed at the THEATRES ROYAL

*HAY-MARKET,*

DRURY-LANE, AND COVENT-GARDEN.

---

PRINTED UNDER THE INSPECTION OF  
JAMES WRIGHTEN, PROMPTER.

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L O N D O N.

PRINTED FOR C. DILLY, IN THE POULTRY.

1788.

92277

# Dramatis Personæ.

HAY-MARKET, 1786.

VILLAMOUR,	MR. PALMER.
OLD MEANWELL,	MR. BOOTH.
YOUNG MEANWELL,	MR. DAVIES.
SKIPWELL,	MR. R. PALMER.
SERVANT,	MR. LYONS.
FLORINDA,	MISS FARREN.
LETTY,	MRS. BULKLEY.

TIT FOR TAT.

A COMEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *An Apartment in Meanwell's House.*

OLD MEANWELL *discovered sitting (with a Letter in his Hand).*

**T**HIS confidential information given me by *Villamour's* father puzzles me exceedingly; I don't know to act in it, whether 'tis better to forewarn my daughter of the plot meditated against her, or without assigning my motives, counsel her to turn his own weapons upon him?—the last seems to be the best method; but I will consult my son about it.—Oh; here comes Florinda and her confidante.

*Enter Florinda and Letty.*

FLORINDA.

What are your commands for me, Sir?

OLD MEANWELL.

I sent for you, my dear, to acquaint you, I've just received an account that Young *Villamour* will be here to-day: but you seem pensive and reserved.—Pray, child, don't be uneasy; come be *candid* with me, and you'll find me as indulgent as you could wish.

LETTY.

Why really, Sir, I was too precipitate in judging for  
B my

my mistress, she's loth to risk her heart in the lottery of love, with so many blanks to a prize.

OLD MEANWELL.

Come, come, this is not the point—I'll be plain with you, Florinda:—You must be sensible how dear you are to me—you know I told you before, that in the last excursion I made to Ireland this business came on the tapis, his father and I agreed to the match, provided you should mutually like each other, and that no compulsion was to be used on *either* side.

FLORINDA.

And yet, Sir, it is an aukward kind of interview at the best.

OLD MEANWELL.

I'll lay no injunction on your obedience to me;—if *Villamour* does n't suit your inclinations, you need only say so, and the treaty's at an end;—if *you* do not please his fancy, he'll depart immediately.

LETTY.

Yes, yes, quite like a soldier's courtship—you like me, I like you; quick, let's be tether'd!—or do you like me? No, nor I you; so let's hear no more of it.

OLD MEANWELL.

I must confess, as I before told you, that I never saw *Villamour*; he was on his travels when I visited his father—but from the character he bears, I dare say you'll join in my prepossession for him, and have reason to thank us for bringing you together.

FLORINDA.

I'm overpower'd with your goodness, Sir; and since you throw implicit obedience out of the question, I'll hazard the trial.

OLD MEANWELL.

*You* shall decide for yourself, Child, and be a free agent on this occasion.

FLORINDA.

Then if I dare communicate a project that *Letty* here has struck out for me—your compliance with it will entirely remove every apprehension.

OLD



# A C O M E D Y.

OLD MEANWELL.

Tell it me, if it is feasible I promise not only my consent, but assistance——

FLORINDA.

'Tis very feasible, Sir——but I am afraid it would be intruding too much on your indulgence.

OLD MEANWELL.

No——put it to the test, try me, one should be a little too good in this world to be *sufficiently* so.

FLORINDA.

None but the best of fathers and of men could utter that expression.

OLD MEANWELL.

Explain yourself, my dear.

FLORINDA.

Villamour, you say, is expected at our house to-day.—If I could so manage it that we might be together without his knowing me, I should be quite easy;—*Letty* has presence of mind, and cleverness—will you consent to our interchanging characters, *she* to be mistress, and *I* maid.

LETTY.

And so make a gentlewoman of me in spite of the three penny planet I was born under;—rare work! nothing to do but drink tea, make curtesies, and get a husband!

OLD MEANWELL.

Odd enough, faith! the very thing I was going to propose to her.—(*Aside.*)

FLORINDA.

Well, Sir, have I your permission?

OLD MEANWELL.

Yes, my dear, I permit this metamorphosis, on condition you neither of you quit it, 'till I give you leave——But will *Letty* be equal to *her* part of the drama?

LETTY.

Me, Sir, you know I'm an old spouter, and have done every character from *Cherry* to *Beatrice* at our holiday plays in the country. Observe the sample, and refuse me due respect if you dare?

“With a good leg and a good foot, Uncle, and money

“enough in his purse, such a man would win any

## TIT FOR TAT,

“ woman in the world, if he could get her good  
“ will.”

What do you think of me now, Sir, can you discover a trace of low life in your servant Letty?

OLD MEANWELL.

Hah! hah! hah! very well, very well, indeed—— you'll be a capital performer: but there is no time to be lost, go and equip yourselves for your respective parts;— make haste, and tell the rest of the family to be on their guard.

FLORINDA.

A very little alteration will answer my purpose, for now adays the maid is a finer lady than the mistress.

LETTY.

But I must to my toilet.—Come, Mrs. Letty, pray attend your duty, Ma'am, and make yourself a little handy in your new employment.

FLORINDA.

You'll be satisfied with my dutiful endeavours, Ma'am!  
(*Curtesying.*)

*As they are retiring, enter Young Meanwell.*

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Sister, I congratulate you;—I've just heard your lover is expected here immediately.

FLORINDA.

I'm not your sister at present;—pay your attention *there*, if you please; but I haven't time to unravel the mystery now, and so leave my father to expound it.

[*Exeunt Florinda and Letty.*]

OLD MEANWELL.

Come, I'll tell you *more* than even she herself's aware of, Tom.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

What I've already heard is enough to surprise me, Sir.

OLD MEANWELL.

But you must be secret —— Know then, when *Villamour* comes here to-day, we shall behold him in disguise.

YOUNG

YOUNG MEANWELL.

In disguise.—Is it from a masquerade, or are you going to give him a fancy-ball at his reception?

OLD MEANWELL.

Neither;—but you must know that his father has given me private notice, that *Villamour* (after much importunity) prevailed on him to permit his coming here in a fictitious character.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

How do you mean, Sir?

OLD MEANWELL.

You recollect that *Villamour* is still in the army, and that his old campaigner of a servant still lives with him; and I am further to tell you, accompanies his master on the present occasion to London.—

YOUNG MEANWELL

And what of that pray?

OLD MEANWELL.

He, in *this* courtship, is to represent his master's name and character, while *Villamour* attends him in the double capacity of a private soldier, and valet, under his servant's name, *Skipwell*.—

YOUNG MEANWELL.

What a romantic piece of knight errantry!

OLD MEANWELL.

And to compleat the jest, *Florinda*, equally as uneasy respecting the sight of her lover (whose plot against her she *can't* have a knowledge of (has just implored me, that she and Letty should *likewise* make a masquerade of it, by exchanging characters; and I've consented.—

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Oh that's a different story—I now see 'twill produce a very original, comic adventure!

OLD MEANWELL.

You would not advise me then to let your sister know the counterplot against her?—

YOUNG

YOUNG MEANWELL.

By no means, Sir, love seems to have contrived it, and let fortune have the management of it.—

*Enter Florinda, dressed as Letty.*

FLORINDA.

Here I am, Sir—and what do you think of me? I'll endeavour to be as pert and saucy a waiting-maid as any in the precincts of St. James's.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

If *Villamour's* servant's as clever a fellow as we're told, and has but a good opinion of himself, indeed, Sister, I think you'll be an excellent match for each other.

OLD MEANWELL.

As to that matter, if 'tis the same person he had with him on his travels—I hear a good account of him, and that he's a very great favourite of his master's.

FLORINDA.

Well, for a little sport I should not be displeased to strike his fancy in the part I represent, but I should be more vain to be sure, if I could lure the notice of his master.—If I can but effect a conquest over him in this disguise, I shall have a higher opinion of myself than ever.

OLD MEANWELL.

And she little knows what a good opportunity she'll have.  
(*Aside to Young Meanwell.*)

FLORINDA.

As for the attendant his importunity will not much trouble me ;—there will be something commanding in my look and manner that will make him know his proper distance, and the awful respect due to me.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Not so fast, Sister, not so fast ; you must consider this fellow will be *your equal*.

OLD MEANWELL.

And will not fail like the rest of them, to make downright *love* to you.

FLORINDA.

With all my heart ; servants are generally communicative ;



tive; love is a great babler, and soldier's always gallant; so I'll make him the historian of his master, and thus have a better chance of unravelling his true character.

*Enter a Servant.*

Sir, there's a soldier below, just arrived in town he says, who begs to speak with you.

OLD MEANWELL.

Shew him in.

*[Exit Servant.]*

YOUNG MEANWELL.

I suppose 'tis Villamour's attendant coming to announce his master.——Where's Letty?

FLORINDA.

I left her at her toilet——where I dare say her looking-glass flatters her that we are very imprudent to put *Villamour* in her power——but she'll be ready before he comes.

OLD MEANWELL.

O here's the *avant courier*!

*Enter a Servant, conducting Villamour disguised in a Light Infantry Uniform—as Skipwell.*

VILLAMOUR.

I was dispatched by my master, Mr. *Villamour*, to Mr. Meanwell——Is it to him I have the honour of paying my duty and respects?

FLORINDA.

If the master's but as smart and well-looking as the servant---(*Aside.*)

OLD MEANWELL.

Yes, my friend, I'm the person you were sent to.

VILLAMOUR.

You have no doubt, Sir, been informed of our coming; my master is dressing at the hotel, and sent me before him with his most dutiful compliments 'till he confirms them in person.

OLD MEANWELL.

And you execute your message in a very becoming manner;

ner, don't you think so, *Letty*? and that he's a good fore-runner of his master?

FLORINDA.

I will not give my opinion too rashly, Sir.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

But you'll welcome the young man, won't you?

FLORINDA.

Certainly!—and what's more, I think he promises very well, Sir—

VILLAMOUR.

You do me honour in thinking so:—I only wish the mistress half as charming as the maid.—(*Aside.*)

OLD MEANWELL.

But what's this fancy dress you have got on? Is it your master's livery?

VILLAMOUR.

Yes, Sir—and *one* that I prefer wearing to any other livery in the world!

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Very heroic, indeed!—and well spoken for a soldier of light infantry.

OLD MEANWELL.

But can't your master travel without his body guard? that he will not let you equip yourself like every other *servant*.

VILLAMOUR.

O, Sir, the hardships of war endear us soldiers to one another, and we always regard our cloth too well, ever to go on service, under false colours.

FLORINDA.

Then you look upon courtship as a kind of service?

VILLAMOUR.

Certainly! and the only one a soldier fears, because the most fatal to his heart.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Bravo!—he's quite Sterne's *La Fleur*! take care of your heart, my girl—for a faithful soldier always proves himself a constant lover.

FLORINDA.

FLORINDA.

*My heart indeed!*

VILLAMOUR.

Don't be offended; what the gentleman's pleased to say will not make me presume more on the possibility of gaining it.

FLORINDA.

A modest, pretty behaved fellow this:—(*Aside.*)

YOUNG MEANWELL.

This is mighty fine talk—but methinks it's a very serious introduction for people of your class;—such a grave formal manner don't suit either of you:—you should be free and frolicksome as if acquainted for a month—This girl's name's *Letty*, what's your's my friend?

VILLAMOUR:

*Skipwell*, at your service, Sir.

OLD MEANWELL.

Come, *Tom*, we're only a restraint on them.—Go, acquaint your sister of Mr. *Villamour's* approach; and, *Letty*, do you shew the young man his master's apartments; and I desire, my friend, that you'll take good care of yourself in this house.

VILLAMOUR.

Sir, you do me greater honour than I deserve.

[*Exeunt Old and Young Meanwell.*](*After a Pause*)—FLORINDA.

They're amusing themselves at my expence—but I can't help it—this lad seems neither ugly nor unpleasing; and I should not pity the servant maid, that had him for a sweetheart.—(*Aside*).

VILLAMOUR.

This girl astonishes me—there is not a rank in life that her figure and manners wouldn't do honour to—but I'll know more of her, and gain her confidence for my own sake—(*Aside*)      (*Addressing himself to her*)

Since we are now alone, on the friendly footing of fellow-servants, tell me, my dear, is your mistress as captivating as yourself?—At any rate she must be exceedingly vain to venture on having an attendant like you.

C

FLORINDA.

to

## TIT FOR TAT.

FLORINDA.

The archness of this question is a direct proof that you've a great mind for a little flirtation with me?

VILLAMOUR.

To tell you the truth, I did not come to this house with any such intention:—for soldier as I am, I keep little company with servants, I hate their low-liv'd wit, and the vulgarism of their conversation.——

FLORINDA.

O, the precious coxcomb!—(*Aside*)

VILLAMOUR.

But with regard to you it is a different case—I was prepossessed in your favour the instant I entered the room; and am inclined to treat you with the highest respect;—then tell me what kind of a waiting-maid are you, with charms like a princess?

FLORINDA.

What you have told me is exactly the language of all the *gentleman's servants* that have seen me.——

VILLAMOUR.

And I should not be much surprised if it was the opinion of all *their masters*.

FLORINDA.

I thank you for that compliment, but I must observe to you that I'm never to be duped by the flatteries of their servants.——

VILLAMOUR.

That is as much as to say, that my station don't please you.

FLORINDA.

True; for a fortune-teller once prophecied, that I should never marry any one but a gentleman of birth and fortune, and I have since positively sworn never to accept any thing else.——

VILLAMOUR.

That's odd enough!—What you have resolved on respecting a husband, I have long determined on as to a wife, and made a solemn declaration never to marry any one but a gentlewoman.——

FLORINDA.



FLORINDA.

Then you need not solicit *me* I find.

VILLAMOUR.

I'm not so much out in my pursuit as you perhaps imagine—you have a very genteel appearance! and one is often of a good family without knowing it.——

FLORINDA.

Hah! hah! hah!—I should thank you for that malicious compliment, if it was not at the expence of my mother.——

VILLAMOUR.

Revenge yourself on *mine* then, if you think I'm entitled to it.——

FLORINDA.

He really deserves it——(*Aside*)——But this is not the point, Mr. *Skipwell*, let us have done with this raillery, a man of wealth and fashion is what I aspire to, and I'll not give up a tittle of it.

VILLAMOUR.

Egad! had I the good fortune to have been born such, I should verify the fortune-teller's prediction.

FLORINDA.

Come, come, this is too much—I desire once more you'll quit this topic.

VILLAMOUR.

You must throw away your charms then.

FLORINDA.

You will not have done then—I must leave you—I really should have done so before——(*Aside—going*)

VILLAMOUR.

Stay one moment if you please—I had something particular to ask *you*, but it's gone quite out of my head.

FLORINDA (*returning*).

I too had something to say to *you*, but you have confused me so!——

VILLAMOUR.

O: now I remember asking you, if your mistress was as pleasing as yourself.

C 2

FLORINDA.

FLORINDA.

*This is only returning to the old subject.*

VILLAMOUR.

Oh, no fair Lititia!—*this* merely concerns my master,

FLORINDA.

It was relative to him too that *I* wished to speak ;—tell me candidly what sort of a man he is ; *your* attachment gives me a good opinion of him ; he must have some merit when *you* serve him.

VILLAMOUR.

You can't refuse me thanking you for that flattering compliment however.

FLORINDA.

Don't take notice of it—it was said inadvertently, and can't be recalled.

VILLAMOUR.

There again is one of those cold cruel answers that chill me—but do what you please, I have only to regret that fortune has not allotted me a station worthy of you.

FLORINDA.

—Let's have no more of this nonsense—O here's your master come at last ; I must stay and have a peep at him.

*Enter Skipwell (dressed in an Officer's Uniform.)*

SKIPWELL.

Ah! *Skipwell*, are you there?—well, were my baggage and you graciously received?

VILLAMOUR.

It was impossible it could be otherwise, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

Go, and acquaint my father-in-law and my *wife* of my arrival.

FLORINDA.

What a disagreeable fellow.—(*Aside.*)—I suppose you mean Mr. *Meanwell* and his daughter, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

Yes, my wife and father-in-law, 'tis the same thing, isn't it, child? I'm come to be married, and they expect me  
for

for that purpose ; don't they ? It wants nothing but the ceremony, and that's a trifle.

FLORINDA.

'Tis a trifle however requiring some serious consideration, Sir——

SKIPWELL.

Perhaps so ; but the more one thinks of it, the less they'll like it, ' too much pudding will choak a dog.'

VILLAMOUR.

Oh ! curse your proverbs ; I wish they'd choak *you*——  
[*Aside*]

FLORINDA.

I see that sense and merit are at a very cheap rate in your country—[*Aside to Villamour.*]

SKIPWELL.

What are you saying to my servant-man, girl ?

FLORINDA.

Nothing, Sir——but——that I wonder what keeps my master.

SKIPWELL.

Why not my father-in-law, pray ?

FLORINDA.

Because he is not yet so.

VILLAMOUR.

Certainly not, Sir, 'till the nuptials are accomplished.

SKIPWELL.

O, langosce for ever !——I'm ready in a crack——and so is the Lady, I'll be bail for her.

FLORINDA.

Oh ! the vulgar wretch—[*Aside*]——but we must first dance at your wedding, Sir—and get gloves and *favours*.

SKIPWELL.

And was any of my country ever backwards at a wedding!——though we often get only black eyes for *favours*——and so call my father-in-law, pray !

VILLAMOUR.

Was there ever such an ignorant provoking rascal ?——

[*Aside*]

FLORINDA.

FLORINDA.

You are in great haste to be married, Sir, though for what *you* know my mistress may be a great coquette, or an arrant scold!

SKIPWELL.

That won't frighten me;—a man living in a barrack is soon used to the clatter of the drums, and may lie close to a church *steeple*, without being disturbed by the *bells*.

FLORINDA.

What delicate sentiments!—[*Aside*].—You speak quite like a *philosopher*, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

O, yes, very like a FIELD OFFICER.

VILLAMOUR.

Was there ever such an infernal blunderer?—[*Aside*]

SKIPWELL.

But harky'e, my girl; are you my Lady's waiting-maid *here*, and single, I presume by your innocence?—She's a mighty fine girl, upon my honour!

FLORINDA.

Both, Sir—but not at *your* service.—[*Aside*]

SKIPWELL.

Well, how do you like me? Don't you think I shall prove very agreeable here.

FLORINDA.

O! *mighty* agreeable! *very* agreeable indeed, Sir!

SKIPWELL.

That's well; encourage that notion, it may be serviceable to yourself, my dear, in the end—She's a nice tit.—

FLORINDA.

Well, Sir, I'll go acquaint my master that you're come; they certainly must have forgot to tell him.—Capricious fate! were ever two men so misplaced in life—[*Aside*]

[*Exit Florinda.*]

SKIPWELL.

Well, Sir, *you* see the beginning of the plot goes off very well—I already prove agreeable, and have made my way with the prime minister.

VILLAMOUR.



VILLAMOUR.

You ill-manner'd, incorrigible blockhead!

SKIPWELL.

What, Sir, with so pleasing an address! so genteel an air as mine!—(*Looking at himself*)

VILLAMOUR.

After all the instructions I give you, to behave with such ignorance and vulgarity!—I particularly desired you to be reserved and sedate; to hide your brogue, and avoid proverbs!

SKIPWELL.

Then you would have me as mute as a fish, and not say word. Consider, Sir, I have not been long a gentleman, but I'll improve by practice; and since I have not gravity enough for you, in future I'll be quite sad, and cry my eyes out, if you chuse it, Sir.

VILLAMOUR.

I do not know what to think, say, or do—I'm quite embarrassed—I wish I had never undertaken this adventure.

SKIPWELL.

Why, Sir, does not the lady suit your *palate*?

VILLAMOUR.

Silence;—here's somebody coming—O! it is Mr. *Meanwell*, so mind my advice, *deport* yourself properly; and if he asks you about *Ireland*, do not forget the lesson I gave you, particularly *the speech*.——

SKIPWELL.

Mum!—never fear, Sir;—I'll *report* myself properly. [*Exit Villamour.*]

*Enter Old Meanwell.*

OLD MEANWELL.

My dear Mr. *Villamour*, I ask you a thousand pardons for having been out of the way on your arrival.

SKIPWELL.

*A thousand pardons*, Sir——if they came from *Rome*, are quite too many——*one* is sufficient for one *omission*;—but if I had a million, they should be at your service.

OLD

OLD MEANWELL.

I hope I shall not have occasion for any *more*, Sir. But I'm quite rejoiced to see you here, Sir; I hope you left my good old friend, your father, perfectly well, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

Never better, Sir, never better, and always at your service.

OLD MEANWELL.

So, I find you could not resist visiting your Dear Hibernia, before your regiment and your mistress; you longed, I suppose, to behold the many happy changes that she had experienced in your absence.

SKIPWELL.

Yes, Sir——now for the speech—(*Aside*)——and was rejoiced to find my country as free in her commerce and constitution as England——with equal prospects of wealth, fame, and prosperity before her——as my master says——

OLD MEANWELL.

Your master!

SKIPWELL.

O curse my blundering tongue—(*Aside*)——Master!—did I say Master?——O yes, the *Quarter-Master* of our regiment, a staff-officer, Sir——And——and as great a politician as I am——Hem! to be sure I an't the dandy—  
*Aside*)

OLD MEANWELL.

O, your humble servant, Sir!——well recovered, faith!——(*Aside*)——However we will defer politics 'till we are over the bottle.

SKIPWELL.

O yes——politics is a *dry* subject sure enough.

OLD MEANWELL.

Well, Sir, how do you like the continent and the courts you've seen in your travels.

SKIPWELL.

O vastly well, Sir——I learned to caper and take snuff in France;——the art of war and drinking in Germany;——to be sulky and proud as a grandee, in Spain.——to sing and play the fiddle in Italy;——and among the  
Turks

Turks to chew opium like bacce ;—as to *learning* and good manners, they're quite natural to me.

OLD MEANWELL.

Very great accomplishments indeed!

SKIPWELL.

But I'm vastly impatient to see your fair daughter, Sir and have been equipping and *adamizing* myself as you see to win her——

OLD MEANWELL.

Hah! hah! hah!—(*Aside*)—you judged well, the dress recommends the wearer, and “the brave deserve the fair.”

SKIPWELL.

But when shall I see her, Sir?

OLD MEANWELL.

Oh : immediately !—She has not been very well, *rather* ——a *little agitated*—expecting you.

SKIPWELL.

Oh! dear Sir——

OLD MEANWELL.

The bashfulness of a *maid* you know !——In the mean time, will you take any refreshment after your journey?

SKIPWELL.

“Will a duck swim?”——I never refuses to crack a bottle with an honest fellow, for I love to wet my whistle.

OLD MEANWELL.

It's rather early for drinking, but the house and cellar are both at your service.

SKIPWELL.

For my part I'll be content with the cellar.

OLD MEANWELL.

Pray, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

Oh! not for the world——I'll follow you, Sir——

OLD MEANWELL.

Well, Sir, I'll shew the way.——*Exit.*

## TIT FOR TAT,

SKIPWELL.

If I'm not as polite, and as much a gentleman as my master, the devil burn me.

(Exit.

## END OF ACT I.

## A C T II.

SCENE I *Meanwell's House.*

*Old Meanwell, and Letty dress'd as Florinda.*

OLD MEANWELL.

WELL, Letty, I see you are dress'd for your character—what have you to say to me?

LETTY.

Sir, something very particular to communicate to you.

OLD MEANWELL.

Ah! what is it?

LETTY.

To clear up matters, that you may have nothing to reproach me with hereafter.

OLD MEANWELL.

You're very serious I find.

LETTY.

Very serious I assure you, Sir—I readily became an accomplice in the plot, not imagining any consequence from it to myself.

OLD MEANWELL.

Why, what mighty consequence has happened to you?

LETTY.

'Tis a bold task to praise one's self; but in spite of all the rules of modesty, I must inform you, Sir, that if you  
do



do not reveal matters, your intended son-in-law won't have a heart to give my mistress——It is time the mask was thrown off, and that he should know who is who——else I cannot be answerable for it a day longer.

OLD MEANWELL.

And what makes you imagine he will not admire my daughter when he comes to a thorough knowledge of her?——Have *you* any doubt of her charms, pray?

LETTY.

By no means, Sir, but you have no opinion of mine——I forwarn you however that they are doing great execution——and I advise you to guard against them.

OLD MEANWELL.

O, Ma'am, I beg you a thousand pardons, I was not acquainted with your powers, Hah! hah! hah!

LETTY.

Very well, Sir, laugh as much as you please; but believe me I'm right, and I can gain my point if I chuse it.

OLD MEANWELL.

Very well, Letty, do so, I shall not hinder you assure yourself.

LETTY.

I must be more explicit, Sir——Mr. Villamour's heart is going very fast; I've already won it.——I know I am not deserving of it——he'll have a wretched taste, and all that——

OLD MEANWELL.

O, by no means——you are too humble indeed.

LETTY.

You may conceive whatever you please, Sir; but——mind what I tell you, Sir, by to-morrow he'll be entirely in my leading-strings.

OLD MEANWELL.

With all my heart, if he loves you so desperately let him marry you.

LETTY.

What——and you'll not forbid the bans, Sir.

## TIT FOR TAT,

OLD MEANWELL.

Not I, upon my honour, if you can bring *him* to it.

LETTY.

Once more I warn you to take care, Sir—I have not yet given full scope to my powers, but if I am permitted to display myself, and at liberty to exert all the arts of my sex, I'll conquer all before me.

OLD MEANWELL.

Conquer, captivate, sink, burn and destroy—in short—marry him, I give you full permission and consent.

LETTY.

Then, Sir, I thank you, and consider my fortune as already made.

OLD MEANWELL.

But here comes 'your conquering hero.'

*Enter Skipwell.*

SKIPWELL.

Ah! have I at length found you, my enchanting fair one? I have been hunting all round the house for you, like a young hound after a liveret, as I'm not happy a minute from your sight—your servant, father-in-law that is to be——

OLD MEANWELL.

Good bye, my children; a third person on these occasions is not the most acceptable company——So I will leave you to yourselves——'Love first and marry afterwards.'

SKIPWELL.

I'm glad, Sir, you have reversed the proverb, but I can do those *two* things both together.

OLD MEANWELL.

Have a little patience, do not hurry my daughter's spirits, her *nerves* are very delicate. [Exit.]

SKIPWELL.

Yes, something like *fiddle-strings*——they will bear playing upon——How much at his ease the old gentleman talks, and how quietly he bids us have patience:

LETTY,

LETTY.

And can I believe, Sir, you are such an enemy to delay? It is certainly your politeness and gallantry make you say so; for I am but just known to you; your love cannot have grown to such a pitch already; I may say it is but newly born.

SKIPWELL.

You're mistaken, fair lady—a love of your making sprouts up all at once like a *mushroom*.—The first ogle from the *gable-end* of your bright eye made him a fine, jolly, amorous, full-grown Cupid—like Cupid in the picture at Rome—Ah! make much of him then, since you are Venus the mother of him.

LETTY.

How much like a lover and a *traveller* he talks—(*Aside*) You cannot say, Sir, that he has been cruelly treated, though he is a bold, impudent fellow, you must own.

SKIPWELL.

'Till he is better provided for, give him then this pretty, little, white hand of yours for a play thing to amuse the child—"When the cat's away the mice will play."

LETTY.

There then, you little coaxing, enticing, pleasing rogue, you, since I cannot quiet you any other way.

(*Giving him her hand.*)

SKIPWELL.

Dear, sweet, charming sugar candy of my heart, how it fires me like—a squib of whiskey! (*Kissing it.*)

LETTY.

How familiar and complaisant—(*Aside*)—Stop, stop, you are too greedy—do not take it for a gingerbread baby, or think that you are sucking a China orange.

SKIPWELL.

Oh! it has such a relish I could devour it, thumb, fingers and all.

LETTY.

Is it possible you can love me to such excess—I can hardly believe the reality of it:

SKIP-

SKIPWELL.

Talk not to me of what's possible ; I love you to—  
What the devil shall I say—(*Aside*) to *botheration* ; and  
you know I do——

LETTY.

Oh ; there's no resisting you *red coats*——But hift—  
here is some body coming——Oh, it is *your* servant.

*Enter Villamour.*

VILLAMOUR.

May I be allowed the liberty of speaking to you, Sir ?

SKIPWELL.

No ;—curs'd be the puppy that dare intrude on our  
privacy, and interrupt our conversation——Begone, Sir,  
or else——

VILLAMOUR.

I have not above a word or two to say, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

Excuse me, Ma'am, if he utters above two *money syllabubs* the third shall be his discharge.

VILLAMOUR.

Oh, damn your syllabubs——Come here, firrah, ungracious dunderhead, come near—(*Aside.*)

SKIPWELL.

Fine usage for an officer, and a gentleman this—(*Aside to Villamour*)---Come, dispatch, or I'll trounce your jacket—Excuse me, my queen.

LETTY.

Use no ceremony with me, sir, finish your business——

VILLAMOUR.

Hear me, you scaramouch, disengage yourself from all  
this mummery—do not give into it ; appear very serious  
and dissatisfied—nay, out of humour—you understand  
me. (*Aside to Skipwell.*)

SKIPWELL.

Mum—(*Aside*)—it is very well, let him call to morrow  
or this evening——if you chuse, Ma'am——Go, firrah,  
and tell him so.

[*Exit Villamour.*

LETTY.



LETTY.

Pray who is it, sir?

SKIPWELL.

Oh, *no body*, Ma'am, some snip of a taylor, about wedding cloaths, that's all——a plague on the impertinence of servants.

LETTY.

They are very troublesome indeed, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

Oh! Ma'am, but for this intrusion, I had such tender things to say to you—But I can only remember what is uppermost in my heart—that I love you, and hope I may expect a mutual return!

LETTY.

'Tis a kind of a sudden---unexpected---question, sir;---but---*you* may live in hopes---(*Affectedly*)

SKIPWELL.

Do you think then you could make a little hole in your heart for me to creep in at---(*Languishing*)

LETTY.

Oh! now you are too coaxing, sir, consider the decorum of my sex——you have too much tinder and touchwood about you, and have not patience to raise a flame.

SKIPWELL.

Let me first light up a match——You will be the flint, I the steel, and so we'll strike up a flash of love between us!

LETTY.

But what would you have me say, Sir?

SKIPWELL.

Only that you love me---be merely my echo, and repeat my words, my princefs.

LETTY.

You are very pressing, sir——Well, I believe *I* love you, sir.——(*Holding up her fan*)

SKIPWELL.

Oh, my dear little jewel--how you transport me---I shall die with joy--I'll not let you say another word, but seal up your lips with mine---(*Kissing her.*)

LETTY.

LETTY.

Oh, fye, fir---Perhaps when you know *me* thoroughly, you will love me less.

SKIPWELL.

Ah, Ma'am, when it comes to *that* you'll be the *greatest loser*, "and find yourself in the wrong box."

LETTY.

You do not know *what kind of a woman I am*, fir; *I am* not so *worthy* of you as you think me.

SKIPWELL.

And I should be on my knees when *I* speak to *you*, Ma'am.

LETTY.

As to *me* I should have chosen *you* in any station. Can I flatter myself that you'd be as kind to me?

SKIPWELL.

Ah, my darling, were you only the flea-catcher of a lady's lap dog, or that I saw you with the proker in your hand making the kitchen fire, I would kneel to *that* as my sceptre, and obey you; that I would, my Queen of Hearts.

LETTY.

I shall soon put that to the test (*Aside*) If I could be sure that your love was sincere:

SKIPWELL.

Let us then swear to be true and faithful to each other, in spite of all the chances and chequers of this mortal life.

LETTY.

With all hearts---(*They both drop on their knees together*)  
Hear us, O Master Cupid.

SKIPWELL.

And *Cymon*, God of Marriage.

LETTY.

Who?

SKIPWELL.

*Cymon*.

LETTY.

Hymen *you* mean.

SKIPWELL.

SKIPWELL.

True, *he was* a High-man sure enough!

LETTY.

Hear our vows, that we will ever love and take each other for better for worse——though fortune should betray our hopes and make beggars of either, or both of us.

SKIPWELL.

And I consent with all my soul——and now let's sign and seal the bargain—(*Kissing her.*)

*(They both rise.)*

LETTY.

That seals the deed with a witness——and now——but here's another coming to interrupt us——Hush!

*Enter Florinda.*

LETTY.

What do you want, Letty?

FLORINDA.

A message, to you, Ma'am.

SKIPWELL.

Must we always be the slaves of servants——you see we are busy, my child; cannot you come again? *Filly de Chambers* should not intrude, but when they are called for.

FLORINDA.

I've private business with my Lady, Sir.

LETTY.

Can't you put it off?

FLORINDA.

Why, really——Ma'am——

SKIPWELL.

Curse that——*Why*——it throws me into the dumps;——I tell you, girl, *your absence would be very good company.*

FLORINDA.

Oh! the disagreeable wretch—(*Aside*)——It is very urgent, Ma'am.

LETTY.

Then, sir, with your leave——

E

SKIPWELL.

SKIPWELL.

If it must be so, it must ; then adieu, my dearest honey.  
*(Looking tenderly at each other.)*

[*Exeunt Florinda and Letty.*]

Manet SKIPWELL.

This is all mighty fine—but shan't I be guilty of disobedience of orders in betraying my master?—No—he has transmogrified me into a gentleman ; at least the representative of one ;—and I am not the *first representative that has betrayed his trust.* [Exit.

*Scene changes to another Apartment.**Enter Florinda and Letty.*

FLORINDA.

You just behaved as I wished you, Letty, not to send away that detestable fellow, 'till I became a witness to his vulgarity and ill-breeding.

LETTY.

Upon my word, Ma'am, it is too much for me to play two parts at once—I must either be mistress or maid, to command or obey.

FLORINDA.

Well, but since he is not present, listen to me as your superior—You plainly see that he is not agreeable to me.

LETTY.

You have not had time to examine him, Ma'am.

FLORINDA.

Is it necessary to see him above twice?—I tell you again he will not answer my purpose.

LETTY

But he will mine though—(*Aside*)—Perhaps your father thinks otherwise, Ma'am.

FLORINDA.

It may be so, for he avoids meeting me ; nor have I exchanged a syllable with him since Villamour's arrival—Thus circumstanced, it is only you, Letty, that can extricate me from this troublesome affair, by telling the gentleman that he does not suit your taste.

LETTY.



LETTY.

I cannot indeed, Ma'am.

FLORINDA.

You *cannot* truly!—Pray what hinders you?

LETTY

Your father.

FLORINDA.

He prevent you; that is impossible.

LETTY.

Positively forbade me, Ma'am.

FLORINDA.

Well, it is my orders you acquaint him that my distaste to this gentleman is invincible; and I cannot think, after what he promised, that he'll deceive me by detaining Villamour.

LETTY.

Has not his coxcomb of a skip prejudiced you against him by some stories to his disadvantage?

FLORINDA.

Pray, Ma'am, who gave you liberty to abuse any one? —What could his servant say to disgust me more than his own ill-manners.

LETTY.

I however mistrust that you listen too much to this prating jackanapes of a soldier—who gives himself airs because he meets encouragement; I suppose—(*Saucily*)

FLORINDA.

I must once more desire that you will behave yourself respectfully; the young man is very discreet, sensible and deserving.

LETTY.

Yes, yes, Ma'am, he's a very good flirt, and has art enough to prejudice people in his favour.

FLORINDA.

But I desire you'll not impute to the servant the fixed abhorrence I bear the master.

LETTY.

Oh! Ma'am, since you take his part, I will not offend you by saying any thing to his disadvantage.

E 2

FLORINDA.

FLORINDA.

I take his part—I justify him—(*fluttered*)

LETTY.

Indeed, Ma'am, you seem to entertain a very favourable kind of opinion of him.

FLORINDA.

Is a favourable—I a kind opinion of him——what insolence! you absolutely lose all respect for me, and fancy yourself, I believe, mistress in reality.

LETTY.

I am sorry that such a trifle should offend you, Ma'am.

FLORINDA.

Get out of my sight—I'll take other measures to disengage myself from this vexatious business.

[*Exit Letty.*]

*Manet* FLORINDA.

I tremble at the bare thoughts of her suggestion—How insolently servants behave when we put ourselves in their power, and are indiscreet enough to trust them with our secrets! I am vexed at what she said—it was relative to a servant;—well, poor fellow, it is not his fault, and I should not vent my displeasure on him—but I see him yonder musing and disturbed—it will only distress me to meet him—so I will avoid him. (*going.*)

*Enter Villamour.*

VILLAMOUR.

Stay: Are you avoiding me, fair Letitia? What have I done to offend you? Believe me, for the short time we have to be together, you need not put yourself under any restraint.

FLORINDA.

What! is your master going to leave us? We shall not have much loss of him.

VILLAMOUR.

Nor of me neither; I have finished your sentence, have not I, Letty?

FLORINDA.

I would not have tacked that to it, as I was not thinking of you.

VILLAMOUR.

VILLAMOUR.

And I never lose sight of you.

FLORINDA.

Hear me once for all, Skipwell—*go, come, or stay*, are equally indifferent to me—I neither like you, nor dislike you, nor will I ever change this disposition—I have particular reasons for it, and indeed I might excuse myself from telling you so.

VILLAMOUR.

Nay, now you make me miserable—if piquing my pride was out of the question, I should be made wretched by your indifference. If you felt but half of what I suffer—and what an extraordinary situation I am in.

FLORINDA.

As to that it cannot be more embarrassed than mine, I assure you—But I hope *you* are not going to leave us in reality.

VILLAMOUR.

Yes, I must go, or lose my senses, as I have already done my heart—and I was to blame in not leaving you the instant I saw you.

FLORINDA.

You cannot say that ever I encouraged your passion.

VILLAMOUR.

But you cannot hinder me from adoring you, and on my knees, I must confess my love—though I leave you the moment after.

*(As he is kneeling, Old and Young Meanwell enter at the back Scene, listening.)*

VILLAMOUR.

But before I rise, ah! give me some assurance that I am not an object of your hatred.

FLORINDA.

Rise, rise, some body may catch you in this posture—do, I beseech you rise—I'll say any thing you please—I do not hate you, I assure you I do not.

VILLAMOUR,

## TIT FOR TAT,

VILLAMOUR.

What, Letty, if I was not what I appear to be, but a man of family and fortune, and that I loved you as much as I do now, you would have no dislike to me?

FLORINDA.

I should be a fool if I had.

VILLAMOUR.

You would return me love for love.

FLORINDA.

I should return you——(*Seeing her father and brother coming*).

OLD MEANWELL.

A very tender, amorous duetto indeed!—What a pity it is to interrupt such a pair of cooing doves.

FLORINDA.

This compleats my confusion—(*Aside*)—Could I hinder the man going on his knees, Sir?

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Not if he was saying his prayers to you, Letty!

OLD MEANWELL.

I have something to say to you in private, girl—with that gentleman's leave;—you can at any time renew your conversation.

VILLAMOUR.

I was just going as you came in, Sir.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

O yes, like a pilgrim to his faint—we saw you on your knees.

OLD MEANWELL.

Go then, and behave with more respect to your master than it is said you do.

VILLAMOUR.

*Me*, Sir.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Yes, *you*, Sir; we hear strange stories of your ingratitude, and misrepresentation of him——*this* damsel is in your confidence I find——

VILLAMOUR.

I do not know what you mean, Sir.

OLD MEANWELL.



OLD MEANWELL.

You may retire, and justify yourself another time.

VILLAMOUR.

Damnation! must I suffer this.—Oh cruel disguise, that subjects me to such painful restraint and indignity—  
(*Aside*) *Exit Villamour.*

(*Florinda walks about discomposed.*)

YOUNG MEANWELL.

There must be something, dear sister, there must be something in this —

FLORINDA.

In *your* head, brother—but nothing in mine—except amazement at your questions and suspicions.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Did not I tell you this spark would make love to you?

OLD MEANWELL.

Come, come, it is this mighty soldier that has given you an antipathy to his master.

FLORINDA.

Pray, was it that audacious mock gentlewoman, Mrs. Letty, told you so?

YOUNG MEANWELL.

No indeed, it is evident from your own behaviour, which has become very testy and captious of late.

FLORINDA.

Because I am quite sick of this foolish farce, and would have thrown off my disguise before now, had I my father's permission.

OLD MEANWELL.

I cannot at present indulge you, and as I agreed to it to humour you, you must please me by wearing it a little longer.

FLORINDA.

If I do, it is very reluctantly, sir;—but I must assure you Villamour's servant is not at all blameable in this affair.

YOUNG

## WIT FOR TAT,

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Well, there is but one way of settling it to the satisfaction of all parties——Skipwell is suspected, so we will persuade his master to discharge him——Do not you think it is the best method, sister?—(*Archly*)

FLORINDA.

O certainly; and if that is done I must likewise desire Mrs. Letty not to come near me—I hate *her* even more than Villamour.

OLD MEANWELL.

Do not be so prejudiced, my dear; suspend your judgment 'till you know him better——I'll answer for it, *Villamour* is the man of your choice at last.

FLORINDA.

Will not you allow me to have eyes, to have ears, sir; I have already heard and seen enough of him to detest him.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

In spite of this, I'll lay any wager that you'll marry Villamour, and with your own consent——but I must interceed for *Skipwell*, and beg you will forgive him, sir.

FLORINDA.

As he has not offended us, we have no right to be angry with him.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Then, since he “*so teizes and he so pleases*”——my sister, to oblige *her*, father.

OLD MEANWELL.

We will leave him to his master.

FLORINDA.

Well, brother, since you will not leave off amusing yourself at my expence——I'll no longer pay for the entertainment; so good bye, Mr. Banter.

[*Exit.*]

OLD and YOUNG MEANWELL.

Hah! hah! hah!

OLD MEANWELL.

Well, I think, Tom, by the time the piece is concluded, they will both have reason to be heartily tired of their characters, and sufficiently punished for the plot contrived against each other.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT II.

## A C T III.

*Scene an Apartment in Meanwell's House.**Enter Villamour and Skipwell.*

SKIPWELL.

Ah! good Sir, my most honoured master—I beg of you——

VILLAMOUR.

You impudent double-faced impostor.

SKIPWELL.

O, Sir, do not take the game out of my hand when I am going to muzzle it——Do not stop me when I am just entering the goal—be compassionate to an old faithful servant, whose fortune entirely depends on your secrecy.

VILLAMOUR.

A rascal to think——

SKIPWELL.

All true, Sir—but I am not the *first rascal* who has made his fortune.

VILLAMOUR.

What! would you have me let a worthy man be cozened by your tricks, and his family deceived under my name and character? Would you disgrace *your country*, you dog, you?

SKIPWELL.

Ah! Sir, what is a man's *country* to *his own* interest?

VILLAMOUR.

If you never mention it again, the instant I have discovered you to the family, I will have you dismantled of your robes, and put in the pillory.

SKIPWELL.

But listen to me, Sir——this dear girl adores me——loves me as a kitten does cream——If I acquaint her of my station, and that she still should have a liquorish-tooth for a healthy, clever, tight fellow like me——though not a gentleman——

VILLAMOUR.

Oh! if they once know you they may do as they please——I wash my hands of it.

F

SKIP.

SKIPWELL:

Then I'll immediately go and discover myself to the tender-hearted generous lady, unplume myself of lace and feathers, and convince you that it is not the colour or quality of a coat, nor all your borrowed finery, that can make any difference in her love, and as Mr. Homer says, in Pope's *Eye-lids*,

“ When great *Ulysses*—

VILLAMOUR.

The fellow's in heroics.

SKIPWELL.

You will see what I am able to do in *paupere persons*, as we say in Latin—and depend upon it that from carrying Brown Bess I shall carry Madam Florinda, and have cleverness enough, from waiting at the side-board, to fit at the table; and that instead of jolting *behind* the coach, become an agreeable companion in a post-chaise.

[Exit.

VILLAMOUR.

All that passes here is like a dream—it is scarcely credible—but I wish I could see Letty, perhaps by discovering myself to her, she could relieve me from this embarrassment; and yet to *leave her* would be the greatest misfortune of all!—I'll see if I can find her—Ah! she's here.

*Enter Florinda:*

VILLAMOUR,

I was in search of you, Letty.

FLORINDA.

It was hard to find me, for I have lost myself—(Going.)

VILLAMOUR (Stopping her.)

Stay, I conjure you, stay, this is the last time I shall trouble you—it is on a matter of the greatest consequence to your mistress and the honour of the family.

FLORINDA.

Tell it to themselves then—I never see you, or hear you, but you give me some cause of uneasiness.

VIL.



VILLAMOUR.

You have the same effect on me—but know, that matters will now wear different face from what they have heretofore done.

FLORINDA.

Well since you raise my curiosity, I'll hear you *this* once, and *this time* only.

VILLAMOUR.

But will you promise to be secret?

FLORINDA.

I never yet betrayed any one.

VILLAMOUR:

You only owe the confidence I am going to place in you to the esteem I bear you.

FLORINDA.

Never mind the motive, but trust my fidelity and believe me.

VILLAMOUR.

Then know, that the man now speaking to you is not what *he* seems.

FLORINDA.

What are you then?—(*Impatient*)

VILLAMOUR.

O, Letty, now is your time to triumph—Is there any one coming?

FLORINDA:

No——

VILLAMOUR.

The situation things are in forces me to this discovery.

FLORINDA.

Well do not keep me in torture, I beg of you.

VILLAMOUR.

The person now with your mistress is not what she takes him for!

FLORINDA.

What is he then?

VILLAMOUR.

My servant.

FLORINDA.

And———(with agitation.)

VILLAMOUR.

I myself am———*Villamour!*

FLORINDA.

Ah!

VILLAMOUR.

I hoped under this disguise to know your lady more perfectly before I declared myself——but the stratagem has entangled me——I dislike the woman I ought to be married to, and love the *maid* who should in me only have found a *new master*.

FLORINDA.

I'll keep my own council——he shall not know me yet:  
(*Aside*)

VILLAMOUR.

How would you have me act?—Your mistress has such a vulgar taste, that she's actually enamoured of my footman; and if I do not instantly prevent it, the father will consent to their nuptials——What am I to do?

FLORINDA.

Your case is a most extraordinary one indeed, Sir.——But first of all I request your pardon for whatever has appeared disrespectful or improper in my past behaviour to you.

VILLAMOUR.

Do not speak of it, it will only recall the distance between us, and make me more wretched and disconsolate.

FLORINDA.

But I permit you, Sir, to revoke all the kind affectionate declarations made me, as I would not have you let down your dignity, on a *poor servant* like me.

VIL-

VILLAMOUR.

But though I cannot unite my fate with yours, Letty, (since I am not fortunate enough to gain your love) yet it is some consolation that you declared you did not hate me.

FLORINDA:

Hist—I hear somebody coming—have a little patience with regard to your servant—matters are not so desperate as you think—we will meet again immediately, and consult how to relieve you from this perplexing affair.

VILLAMOUR.

You shall entirely direct me.

*(Exit Villamour.)**Enter Young Meanwell.*

YOUNG MEANWELL.

So I have caught you again, sister, and perhaps almost in the same situation—Pray were you teaching the young man his prayers again?

FLORINDA.

You may now say whatever you please, brother, for I have *such* agreeable news to tell you.

YOUNG MEONWELL.

What about?

FLORINDA.

Skipwell is not Skipwell—nor Villamour Villemour.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

I do not understand you—you speak in riddles.

FLORINDA.

I had it just now from himself.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

From whom pray? or what is it, I cannot comprehend you?

FLORINDA.

Come, my father must be informed of it—I shall have occasion for your assistance too—I must now concert a plan to secure the heart I before rejected—and request,  
brother

brother, that you will be very secret, and not mention a word of it.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

O! never fear, I'll be secret enough, for I cannot divulge what I do not know.

FLORINDA

Come along, brother, let us lose no time; there never was any thing more propitious or more pleasing than this is.

[Exit hastily.]

YOUNG MEANWELL.

I see that *Villamour* has thrown off the mask at last. Here he comes—I'll have some sport with him.

Enter Villamour.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Stay, Skipwell, a word with you.

VILLAMOUR.

What would you please to say, Sir.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

You have made love to our maid, Letty, I understand.

VILLAMOUR.

How could one be in company with her, and refrain from it, Sir?

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Does she receive you kindly?

VILLAMOUR.

You would not have me so ungallant as to tell, Sir—But suppose *she had* a partiality for me, how does it concern *you*, Sir.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

A partiality for you! a fine story truly—No—no—she could not have such a despicable opinion of herself as to look at one *so much beneath her hopes*.

VILLAMOUR.

So much beneath her hopes!—

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Yes, for I'll condescend to *tell* you, Sir, that I have a very *honourable regard* and *brotherly affection* for this girl,  
and



and she knows it, and it is her own fault if she remains long single, let my father take it as he will.

VILLAMOUR.

O, this accounts for the high and ambitious tone my lady talks in—(*Aside*)

YOUNG MEANWELL.

I therefore cannot brook a lover of your rank in her train.

VILLAMOUR.

Faith! I believe you, Sir, for I am not satisfied with a rival like *you*, as you must of course bear away the prize—if she loves you in return:

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Loves me in return; do you imagine I am not deserving of it?

VILLAMOUR.

O, yes, Sir, but you do not expect praise from *one* you suppose your rival?

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Pray who am I speaking to? You seem a very conceited kind of a gentleman.

VILLAMOUR.

Speaking to, Sir—to Skipwell.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Well, I desire I may never hear or see any more of your attempts on *Letty's* affections—if I do, your master must correct you, or you will find me a different person to deal with.

[*Exit Young Meanwell.*]

VILLAMOUR.

Must I bear these repeated injuries, and have both my honour and my love insulted? Yet I think this attachment cannot be mutual:—however *Letty* shall clear up all doubts, and one way or other disentangle me from this labyrinth of anxiety, hope and perplexity.

[*Exit*]

*Scene*

*Scene changes to another Apartment in Meanwell's House.*

*Enter Old Meanwell and Letty.*

LETTY.

Sir, you told me you gave Villamour up entirely to my management—I took you at your word, and have now taught him to hop after me like a *pet magpie*; but do you think my mistress will resign her pretensions to him.

OLD MEANWELL.

O yes; she bids me tell you that she has given up all right and title to him, as you took so much pains to train him to your own liking.

LETTY.

And have I really your permission to marry him, Sir?

OLD MEANWELL.

Have not I given it already?—You have my consent without *his* asking it—but I must lay one restriction on you to exculpate ourselves—I insist upon it, that you will give him a hint who you are.

LETTY.

O Lord, Sir, if I give him the least hint, that (as my lover himself wou'd say) will be entirely '*letting the cat out of the bag*.'

OLD MEANWELL.

But you know he follows you about like a *pet magpie*—and he is so much under your command that I desire you will do it.

LETTY.

Well, for Heaven's sake retire, Sir—my enamorado's to meet me—this you know is the finishing stroke to make my fortune—so leave me a clear stage, and fair play.

OLD MEANWELL.

Acquit yourself handsomely then.

LETTY.

Never fear, Sir, and now compleat my conquest!—

*(Exit Meanwell.)*

—What a lucky girl thou art, Letty—O I shall run wild with

with my good fortune, and so outshine the world in dress, equipage, routes, masquerades, balls, and I don't know what!——But here comes my lover——

*Enter Skipwell.*

SKIPWELL.

Have I at length found you, my dove?——Ah! as the play say——‘Was it not unkind to leave me like a *turkey drooping*, all alone?’

LETTY.

Rather illiterate——but no matter, his fortune makes amends——(*Aside*)——I am sure, Sir, it is not my wish to be absent from you—for I have drooped like a *moultring Canary bird*, since we parted.

SKIPWELL.

Oh! you are sweeter and dearer to me—*than molasses to a Yankee Doodle.*

LETTY.

And you are the very honey-comb, currant-jelly, and marmalade of my affection.

SKIPWELL.

Oh, the delicious words!——do let my lips smack them up from yours——

(*Sings*) I'm brim-full of love, and you're all over charms.  
And like a lad of wax I must melt in your arms.

(*Kissing her*)

LETTY.

Oh! fye, Sir——you are so *pressing* upon one——

SKIPWELL.

O that is true—pray, Miss, accept this *bucket* of myrtle.  
(*Presenting some myrtle*)

LETTY.

'Tis vastly pretty, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

And like yourself, Ma'am, the more you *squeeze* it, the sweeter it is.

LETTY.

Oh! Lord, Sir!

G

SLIP.

SKIPWELL.

Egad, as she is in so coming a humour, I had better for fear of a discovery——Sweet, sugar plumb of affection, I am dying with impatience at the delay of our happiness——What say you to a private match! I'll go and marry you instantly, for I am *broiling* on Cupid's gridiron.

LETTY.

I'll strike while the iron is hot——How he jumps into my wishes!—(*Aside*)

SKIPWELL.

Well, my primrose, what say you?

LETTY.

Why, Sir, if I thought you would not consider me *too forward*.

SKIPWELL.

*Too forward*, my tit mouse, not in the least, I should hate you if you was *too backward*——In the name of love; then, let the priest get before the lawyer; for I know one at hand, who will tack us together before you can say trap-stick.

LETTY.

Oh, la, Sir, *but what shall I say to my papa?*

SKIPWELL.

Oh! what's always said upon these occasions, Honey! We will come back and fall upon our marrow-bones, ask pardon, and say that our love was so violent we could not help it.

LETTY.

Well, on one condition, I'll consent.

SKIPWELL.

Name it quickly, then, sugar-candy of my soul——

LETTY.

That you will keep our marriage secret, 'till I give you leave to mention it.

SKIPWELL.

Silent as a dumb man——Come, then, my girl—we will fly to Father Tackum——I'll throw my commission at your feet.

[*Exeunt*  
*Scene*]



*Scene a Room in Meanwell's House.*

*Enter Old and Young Meanwell and Florinda.*

FLORINDA.

If I did not love Villamour you must own I should be very ungrateful.

OLD MEANWELL.

So you got a little *out* of him in the conversation you had together?

YOUNG MEANWELL.

No, he was too crafty, and never thrown off his guard, though I endeavoured to put his temper to the test.

OLD MEANWELL.

Well, I am very glad that he is the dupe of his own stratagem—nothing however can be more flattering to him than the discretion with which you, *Flora*, have hitherto acted

YOUNG MEANWELL.

But how far has he proceeded, Sister; I hope his jealousy of me will not have any adverse consequences?

FLORINDA.

I have not the least reason to be dissatisfied with him;—and as to you, the next interview must bring about an explanation.

OLD MEANWELL.

Why, girl, you have not vanity enough to expect that he'll be so desperate as to offer you his hand in your present character?

FLORINDA,

Yes, Sir, else he never shall have mine—but I know we are destined for each other—it was a match registered above, and must be accomplished here;—what obligations I owe you, Sir, for indulging my scheme—Villamour can never think of the story without loving me, and I'll never talk of it, without loving him—it was laying the foundation of our happiness for life—it was the most propitious contrivance of chance—the most *lucky deception*.—

G 2

YOUNG MEAN-

YOUNG MEANWELL, *I told you!*

Hey day! Sister, how you run on, what a flood of eloquence.

OLD MEANWELL. *and you say*

Well, if *you* end as you began, it will be the most delightful entertainment to all parties.

FLORINDA,

You will see that immediately—I tell you Villamour is conquered, and I have him in my chains.

OLD MEANWELL.

And they are *golden* ones, which is more than he expected; but I begin to pity his sufferings, and wish him relieved from his solicitude.

FLORINDA.

But I must be witness to more before I display my compassion.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

To see prudence lose the victory in the conflict—  
Eh, Flora!

OLD MEANWELL.

As much as to say that he should be sensible of his folly and disgrace, and yet submit to your fascination!—What a presumptuous arrogance of self-love!

FLORINDA.

It is the self-love of a woman, father, and that never varies from its object—but go to your posts, and you'll see how I will compleat my conquest.

*(Exeunt severally.)*

*Scene changes to another Apartment in Meanwell's House.*

*Enter Villamour and Skipwell.*

VILLAMOUR.

Well, Skipwell, have you seen the lady and discovered yourself as I ordered you.

SKIPWELL.

As I have sworn secrecy to my *dulcinea* about our marriage, I must dissemble a little—*(Aside)*—O yes, Sir,  
I told

I told her I was not what I seemed, that my real name was *Skipwell*—that I was only a poor soldier, and occasionally your footman.—Very well, my lad, said she, every body has some rank and uniform on the stage of life.—your livery costs you nothing—so much the better for us both.

VILLAMOUR.

What a ridiculous story you are telling me.

SKIPWELL.

O, Sir, you may lead a woman with a cobweb though you cannot drag her with a cable; and I have done it to some purpose, for we are going to be tethered directly.

VILLAMOUR.

What! with the family's consent.

SKIPWELL.

Marry come up, and what disgrace to her family, pray?

VILLAMOUR.

You are a very impudent fellow, Skipwell!

SKIPWELL.

And if it was not for a little *impudence a modest man* could not thrive in this world, Sir.—I pursued my way and found it.

VILLAMOUR.

It is not possible;—I will therefore go myself and acquaint Mr. Meanwell how matters are situated.

SKIPWELL.

Who! old decency, my father-in-law?—O, we have him under our thumb, I assure you—he is a very good natured, jolly, honest cock, and has given his consent already.

VILLAMOUR.

Pshaw! you are a blockhead—Have you seen Letty lately?

SKIPWELL.

Letty!—not that I recollect—but I have other fish to fry, and above taking notice of such low cattle as waiting-maids—I have given up that kind of game to you, Sir.

VILLAMOUR.

Vanity or love has turned the fellow's brain, I believe.

SKIP-

SKIPWELL.

You are free and easy ; however when I am married and settled, I will be glad to see you at my house in town—and hope whenever you visit England, you will make me your home, and that we will live together as old friends and new acquaintances.

VILLAMOUR.

You do me a great deal of honour. Sir.

SKIPWELL.

But I see your waiting-maid there at the end of the gallery—perhaps you wish to see her—for I must to my love ———

*Exit singing—*“ I kiss'd and prattled with *fifty-five* maids, &c.”

VILLAMOUR.

What an original he is—But now for Letty.

*Enter Florinda.*

VILLAMOUR.

Stay, Letty, stay—I intreat you stay—I have something very serious to say to you.

FLORINDA.

To me, Sir ?

VILLAMOUR.

It troubles me to leave you without convincing you I do not think myself to blame in so doing.

FLORINDA.

Why need you justify yourself to me, Sir,

VILLAMOUR.

It is my wish to be undeceived—but Young Meanwell loves you ;—he told me so, and with an *honourable, brotherly affection* !

FLORINDA.

Very true ———

VILLAMOUR.

And I conclude you are sensible of his passion from the indifference with which you treat me.

FLO-



FLORINDA.

I must own I love him equal to myself, but I never can be *his* wife, and he knows it.

VILLAMOUR.

What a contradiction!—Explain yourself, I conjure you, and at once tell me your situation, as my happiness is staked upon it.

FLORINDA.

Tell a man that is leaving me.

VILLAMOUR.

I will not leave you—I can never leave you.—But since you know I adore you above every woman upon earth. Give me then possession of a hand and heart I value above the world.

FLORINDA.

What in spite of degrading yourself—in spite of your father's displeasure!

VILLAMOUR.

He will forgive me the instant he has seen you—as to the world's opinion, my happiness will smile at its malice, and your worth be an antidote against the venom of its censure.

*Enter Old and Young Meanwell.*

OLD MEANWELL.

'Against the venom of its censure.'

OLD and YOUNG MEANWELL.

Ha! ha! ha! ha!

OLD MEANWELL.

We have heard it all, not a syllable has escaped us—I find you have not waited for my consent.

*Enter Letty and Skipwell.*

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Did not we tell you it would come to this?

FLORINDA.

Oh, my dearest father!

VILLAMOUR.

What do I hear—*her* father!

SKIP.

SKIPWELL.

And what do I hear——her father!——(*Aside.*)

VILLAMOUR.

You, her father, Sir——

OLD MEANWELL.

Yes, Villamour——the same stratagem, the same *deception* was contrived by mutual chance against each other.

LETTY.

Villamour! and who the duce have I married?——(*Aside.*)

SKIPWELL.

(*Going up to Letty*)——Who the devil are you, Ma'am?

LETTY.

And who the duce are you, Sir?——(*To Skipwell.*)

VILLAMOUR.

This is my footman——Madam——(*to Letty.*)

FLORINDA.

And this is my waiting-maid Sir?——(*to Skipwell.*)

LETTY.

O, how my fine hopes are vanished!

SKIPWELL.

Zounds! but what a tumble I have got!

VILLAMOUR.

Come, Skipwell, no more of this——but as you and Mrs. Letty have been acting for us on this occasion, I shall endeavour to reward you to your satisfaction.

FLORINDA.

Yes, our good fortune shall contribute to theirs——they must drop their grandeur and titles, but they shall amply experience my kindness.

SKIPWELL.

Then, Mrs. Rib, I take you with all my soul——“for *Skipwell's* himself again.”

LETTY.

And, Bone of my Bone, I am yours with all my heart——and you know we swore it, ‘in spite of all the changes and chequers of this immortal life.’

OLD

OLD MEANWELL.

Well, Flora, did not I tell you, that Villamour would be the man of your choice at last?

FLORINDA.

You told me but the truth indeed, sir.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Will Villamour forget the affronts I gave to Skipwell?

VILLAMOUR.

I not only forgive but thank you. (*takes his hand.*) But what delights me most are the proofs I gave you, Florinda, of the purity and disinterestedness of my passion.

FLORINDA.

And you may judge of the value I set upon your heart, by the means I took to gain it.

VILLAMOUR.

Here, however, my dear Florinda, let us jointly renounce all disguise and dissimulation; and let us both, for the future, by mutual frankness and sincerity, endeavour to atone to each other for our mutual deception.

F I N I S.

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